Reassigning Meaning Summary

In her article “Reassigning Meaning”, Simi Linton discusses society’s views on those generally called ‘disabled’ and the underlying meanings of these views. On the surface, society seems to have accepted disabilities and those who are afflicted. However, Linton points out a certain tension that arises when a line is drawn between the ‘able-bodied’ and the ‘disabled’. Linton describes this as “ableism” or “the idea that a person’s abilities or characteristics are determined by disability or that people with disabilities as a group are inferior to non-disabled people”. Linton explains that society’s attempts to group ‘disabled’ people, whether medically or socially, indicates certain assumptions about this group. She argues that “the degree and significance of an individual’s impairment is often less of an issue than the degree to which someone identifies as disabled. Linton wants readers to allow people to decide for themselves whether they are disabled and how that affects them.